An Approach to Identifying Future Brigade Tasks: Addendum

J. Douglas Dressel

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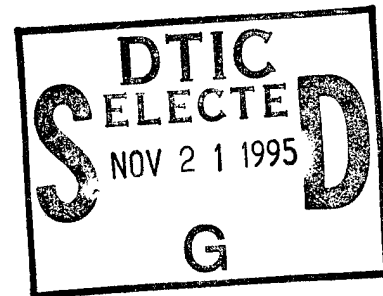
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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words):

This Research Note describes the continuation of earlier research (Research Report 1655, ADA 275686) on an approach to collect Brigade training information from military experts. The current research permits experts to speculate on the future role of the Brigade and identify areas which would require training emphasis to prepare the Brigade to fulfill this role. Preliminary training implications and conclusions about the approach are presented.

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AN APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING BRIGADE TASKS: ADDENDUM

CONTENTS

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and reduced Defense funding in the Federal budget have increased the importance of spending U.S. Army training dollars wisely. The fall of the Soviet Union has increased the instability of the world, in part, by allowing various deep-rooted regional conflicts to erupt. In this global environment, the brigade with its weapons of tremendous lethality could play a more independent role rather than being only the coordinating headquarters orchestrating the battalions' actions to execute the division's mission. It may operate more in the role of a detached maneuver force for mid-intensity regional conflicts. To accommodate any new brigade role, training strategies will be changed to reflect the new requirements and reduced training budgets.

The first step in developing training strategies is to determine what tasks need to be trained. An earlier research effort (Dressel, 1993)* used scenario-driven interviews of eleven former battalion commanders or staff to identify tasks of increased importance for future brigades. These officers were lieutenant colonels with an average of 21 years of service in either armor or infantry and included four Desert Storm battalion commanders. These officers indicated that the following actions will have increased importance for brigades of the future:

a. reconnaissance
b. rehearsal
c. issuing timely warning orders
d. logistics planning
e. full utilization of combat assets
f. planning beyond the initial battle

The current effort is modified as a result of that research. Former and current brigade commanders were questioned on the possible roles of brigades in the future and the consequent training implications.

Method

Interview Instrument

In the previous research with battalion commanders/staff, scenario-driven interviews were the basis to solicit participant's comments. The battle scenarios (one defensive, one offensive) portrayed situations in which the brigade was detached

1

* Dressel, J.D. (1993). An Approach to Identifying Future Brigade Tasks (ARI Research Report 1655). Alexandria, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. (ADA275686)

(operating independently) from the division for approximately 24-36 hours. The central question from those interviews was what critical tasks must the brigade perform in order to successfully accomplish its mission. The current interview approach was modified to increase the participant's possible range of responses.

In the current interviews, the brigade commanders were asked what they thought would be the roles of brigades in the new post-Cold War world. This was a less restrictive interview than the scenario-driven interview which presupposed independent brigade action. The interview was driven by the insights and informed speculation of these highly competent and experienced officers. The interview instrument is found in Appendix A.

Participants

Five current or former maneuver brigade commanders participated in the interviews. These officers had extensive command experience.

Procedure

Structured interviews were performed individually in each officer's office. A retired U.S. Army armor colonel acted as the principal interviewer while a researcher took notes, tape recorded the session, and took part in the discussion. The interview was not for attribution to increase the candidness of the participant's remarks. Although each interview was scheduled to last 45 minutes, each lasted over an hour with the participant's ready approval.

Results

Interview Approach

The participants were relaxed and forthcoming in their comments. Their ease may be a reflection of their approval of the function of the interview. Similarly, they were being queried about their business (or recent business) and its future: the running and operation of brigades. The interview tapped into a process all competent managers are continuously and implicitly performing: How is my group today and how can it improve? What does the future hold and what can be done to strengthen my group for that future?

Data Reduction

After the interviews were completed, the data reduction and synthesis process began. The researcher first read his notes then played the tape while recording (from the cassette's foot counter) the numerical location of the taped interview passage onto his notes. The tape was played again while the researcher

transcribed the participant's remarks. After this was completed, key points were extracted from the extensive transcription. By using the numerical location, desired interview passages could be quickly located and reviewed for clarification. This process was followed for each of the five interviews. Then, the five sets of key points were examined to identify any commonality or consensus of remarks. The results of that examination are presented next.

Interview Findings

Likely future role of brigades. Four of the five participants said it was very likely that brigades (Bdes) of the future would fight as part of a joint operation. The fifth participant said the Bde would remain within the division (Div) during the joint operations of the future. Remaining within the Div is a function of both the necessary logistics (primarily fuel) and the more extensive command experience of the major general leading it.

Should Bdes operate more independently, they would need more reconnaissance and surveillance assets. Bdes currently borrow these from battalions (Bns) which in turn weakens the Bn effort. Independent operations would require increased emphasis on logistical planning to ensure high fuel demand assets (tracked and rotor) have the fuel where and when needed. Other likely needs of a Bde (rather than a Div) in a joint operation include:

a. development of "hot spot" country video briefs to be updated every two months

b. training on Bde deployment

c. training in doing liaison for joint operations

d. training in receiving logistical support

e. increased emphasis on officer training in a joint environment starting at the rank of major

Current Needs

Regardless of the future role of Bdes, all officers noted the need for improved Bde staff training. The officers generally perform their individual duties well. However, they need more training when working together to function smoothly, and to integrate and disseminate information which may be critical to other staff members. Staffs also need to become more efficient during hasty planning operations and be aware of the combat situation to respond to the commander's queries. All commanders remarked that the current Bde staff needs augmenting to support 24-hour operations.

Officers noted the current need of training logistical synchronization and synchronization of fires. Synchronization of fires is a complex and costly task but it is a force multiplier which will be performed in combat and therefore needs adequate training for competence in execution.

Several officers noted the efficiency of multi-echelon training for Bdes and its effectiveness if it could be observed and evaluated by an outside party.

All officers noted the need to train for operations other than war (OOTW). At the least, specific training just prior to deployment was indicated as necessary. The majority of officers reported that a more substantial OOTW training program was warranted.

Also, most officers said training in military operations-urban terrain (MOUNT) is needed for future conflicts. They also noted the need for exercises at the National Training Center (NTC) with threats other than the Soviet-based "Krasnovians."

Discussion

As in the earlier work with battalion commanders, the structured interview approach with brigade commanders provided systematic information about combat training from subject matter experts. The current effort allowed more latitude for responses because the interview was not scenario-driven nor forced the concept proffered last time of independent Bde operations. As a result, participants could agree or disagree about how Bdes might operate. The outcome was that Bdes are more likely to be part of a joint task force than operating separately.

The addition of a retired colonel, who was more a peer to the participants than the civilian researcher, aided the conduct of the research. He both facilitated the interview and acted as an additional data analyst with a perspective slightly different from that of the researcher.

This research effort confirmed many findings of the previous work. The importance of rehearsals was noted. Should the Bde be involved in independent operations, it would require increased reconnaissance assets. It would also require increased logistical assets and increased emphasis on logistics training.

The role of live training at the NTC received special emphasis. One brigade commander noted that his training emphasis was training Bns, Bn commanders, and company commanders. The training of his Bde staff was clearly secondary. His goal was that his staff be proficient enough to benefit from the NTC experience. However, it was here at the NTC where the staff

received the bulk of its training. It should be noted that a live simulation is the most expensive form of training. It should be used as an evaluation of performance acquired by other (less costly) methods. In this situation, staff training could be conducted using a variety of techniques including: staff exercises, training without troops, or training with constructive simulations such as Janus or Brigade/Battalion Simulation (BBS). Increased emphasis on collective Bde staff training at a level of simulation lower than live simulation is clearly indicated.

Conclusions

A frequently reoccurring theme throughout these interviews was the need for increased collective Bde staff training. The general feeling was that although Bde staff members perform their individual duties well, they do not work well as a group. Information unimportant to the receiving staff member is not forwarded to another staffer to whom the information is critical. The lack of a smoothly functioning staff will have an increased adverse impact in the future when "hasty" combat with short planning will likely become more frequent.

APPENDIX:

Interview Instrument

Identification of Future Brigade Training Tasks

Background

The interaction of a decreased Soviet military threat and increased third-world conflicts have resulted in a high degree of military uncertainty and placed a premium on cost-effective training within a reduced U.S. defense budget.

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences has been given the mission of developing a methodology to support more specific training strategies to meet future brigade training needs.

The initial step in developing this brigade training methodology is to isolate the critical elements and tasks to define the training skills/tasks that will be critical to future maneuver brigades. This initial step will be accomplished through interviews with subject matter experts (SME).

Interview Questions

Future Missions and Roles

1. Are future brigade COMBAT missions and roles likely to change?
If so, in what manner?

2. What brigade doctrinal and organizational changes will be required to meet future needs? (size, span of control, staff/structure)

3. For our purposes, we are assuming that maneuver brigades will be more likely to operate independently of a division in the future. If so, for how long...days, weeks?

Future Brigade Training

1. What are the primary training deficiencies that exist at brigade level now? In the future?

2. What critical tasks do you feel to be the most important when formulating future brigade-level training strategies, techniques, devices, and priorities? (Critical tasks are those tasks that if not performed well would jeopardize mission success.) Generic areas for critical tasks in this context are planning, command and control, communication, operations, logistics, intelligence.

3. Preliminary research has indicated that the following six areas are of particular training importance:
    Reconnaissance
    Rehearsal
    Issuing warning orders (early)
    Logistics planning
    Maximizing combat assets
    Planning beyond the initial battle

Do you agree or are there others that should be added?

4. What is the most effective training strategy for future maneuver brigades (active and reserve) that would ensure proficiency in the critical tasks you have identified? (assume austere training budgets) (The most efficient strategy could employ different approaches (training aids, devices, simulators, exercises) for different tasks.